

# Focus on

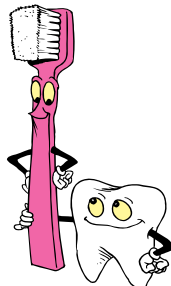
# Fluoride

This newsletter is designed to share information on school fluoride programs with administrators, principals, and teachers. PLEASE ROUTE THIS newsletter to staff working with the school fluoride program.

**Vol. 6, No. 3 October 2001**

## Fight Decay the Fluoride Way

*Fluoride works in two ways -- systemic and topical.*



**1. Systemic fluorides** are ingested or swallowed. Systemic fluorides can include community drinking water, fluoride drops or fluoride tablets that are chewed and swallowed. All of these will benefit both the teeth already in the mouth and those developing deep under the gums. Water fluoridation is the most cost-effective, practical and safe means for reducing the occurrence of tooth decay in a community. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recognized water fluoridation as one of the great public health achievements of the twentieth century. Studies show that water fluoridation can reduce the amount of cavities in children by as much as 60 percent and can reduce tooth decay in permanent teeth by nearly 35 percent.

**2. Topical fluorides** are not ingested or swallowed. Topical fluorides can strengthen only the teeth that are present in the mouth. Examples of topical fluorides are toothpastes, treatments in the dental office, fluoride mouthwashes and school fluoride mouthrinse programs. Topical fluorides can reduce decay by 20 percent to 40 percent.

## Did You Know??

Tooth decay is the single most common chronic childhood disease. It is five times more common than asthma and seven times more common than hay fever.

## Gum Disease and Life-Threatening Diseases . . . . .

Want some  
life-saving  
advice?

Ask your dental hygienist.



**October is National Dental Hygiene Month.** This year's theme  
*Want Some Life-Saving Advice?*

**National  
Dental Hygiene  
Month  
October 2001**

*Ask Your Dental Hygienist* focuses on research that links life-threatening conditions to oral health. Detecting disease early is key to saving lives. And when it comes to conditions such as oral cancer, diabetes, eating disorders and HIV, help in detection may come from an unlikely source - your registered dental hygienist.

*Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General* confirms that the signs and symptoms of life-threatening diseases appear in the mouth long before they show up in other parts of the body. Dental hygienists and other oral health professionals routinely look for signs and symptoms of these diseases, which can be detected during regular oral health examinations. The presence of periodontal (gum) disease has been linked to the development of serious illnesses and conditions such as heart disease, respiratory ailments and the delivery of pre-term, low-birthweight babies. Recent studies investigating the relationship between periodontal disease and health problems suggest that bacteria found in the mouth when periodontal disease is present can enter the bloodstream and spread throughout the body. These bacteria can infect the heart and other body organs and cause inflamed coronary arteries and blood clots, as well as changes in blood pressure and heart rate.

About 75 percent of adults have some form of periodontal disease. The majority do not know they have it because it is usually painless and silent in its early stages. Regular brushing and flossing and regular professional care can keep gum disease under control.

# **SAFETY** and Children's Teeth . . . . .

Injuries that occur during motor vehicle crashes and falls are a major cause of damage to children's teeth. As a result of injury, teeth can be fractured, dislocated or lost from the socket. The jaw and bone supporting the teeth also can be fractured.

At each stage of development, children are more likely to suffer different types of injury. For babies and toddlers, baby gates should be placed at both the top and bottom of stairs to prevent falls. Parents need to place infants/toddlers in safety seats when traveling in motor vehicles; all occupants should wear safety belts.

As children enter school, remind them to stand quietly in line for the drinking fountain. Pushing and shoving at the drinking fountain can result in a broken front tooth. Protruding front teeth need orthodontic care to reduce their susceptibility to injury. Chewing on pencils, ice or cracking nuts usually injures teeth and gums in the back of the mouth.

For older children, using bike helmets and protective mouth guards and face gear when playing sports is strongly recommended. They cushion blows that might otherwise cause broken teeth and injuries to the lips and face and sometimes even jaw fractures. Oral piercing also can result in injury to teeth, as the jewelry can cause fracture and chipping.

*Following these recommendations can prevent oral injuries.*



## **Chewing Gum and Tooth Decay . . . . .**

Chewing sugarless gum can stimulate production of saliva and increase salivary flow. Saliva is a natural buffering agent that washes the teeth and neutralizes the acids from sugary foods. Xylitol chewing gum goes one step further.

Chewing gum containing xylitol, an artificial sweetener, appears to inhibit the growth of streptococcus mutans, the bacteria that causes tooth decay. One study from Finland shows not only a reduction in decay in children who have chewed gum with this ingredient, but also the reversal of small cavities.

Used with other cavity prevention methods -- such as fluoride, sealants and reduced sugar intake -- a xylitol-sweetened chewing gum appears to be a helpful treatment for controlling tooth decay.

## **Supplies...**

If you need supplies for your school fluoride program, call: 701.328.4930 • 1.800.472.2286 • Fax: 701.328.1412

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